



## STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH *All of God's Creation*

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, August 6, 2023

### **We Need a Pattern of Peace, Not War**

We recently marked the 78th anniversary of the Trinity Test, when the United States exploded the first ever atomic bomb in the New Mexican desert on July 16, 1945, starting the nuclear age. Opening in theaters was Christopher Nolan's film *Oppenheimer* about J. Robert Oppenheimer, the theoretical physicist who helped develop the first nuclear weapon. Notably, the film ignores completely the people who lived in the shadow of the test site.

“Unfortunately, **nuclear weapons are not an artifact of the past, and their effects are still present for many communities today.** US nuclear testing in places such as New Mexico, Nevada, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands spread radioactive material for hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of miles. In some cases, this caused immediate radiation poisoning, and in the long term led to persistent health problems, like cancers, across generations. As is so often the case, the people who have borne the heaviest burden of these activities are often people of color, Indigenous communities, children, and those living in poor, rural communities. Nuclear weapons and the harm they've caused are very much a present-day problem and it's up to us to ensure a better future.” (*Union of Concerned Scientists*, 7/13/23)

“According to a new study, the fallout floated to 46 states, Mexico, and Canada within 10 days. In 28 of 33 New Mexico counties, it estimates the accumulation of radioactive material was higher than required under the federal compensation program.

That program — the **Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) of 1990** — has paid out more than \$2.5 billion to people who lived downwind of dozens of aboveground explosions conducted starting in the 1950s at the Nevada Test Site, as well as uranium industry workers and ‘on-site participants’ at the Trinity Test Site. **New Mexico civilians have never been eligible.**

New Mexico Sen. Ben Ray Lujan ... and ... Sen. Mike Crapo of Idaho have pressed for years to expand RECA to include people who lived in their and other states during test periods. [Last] Thursday, the Senate took up the amendment for the first time and passed it. Approval by the House remains uncertain, with some members contending the cost is too high. **The program will expire next May without further action.**” (Karin Brulliard and Samuel Gilbert, Washington Post, published in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 7/31/23)

**[Take action today and tell your members of Congress to champion strong RECA amendments that will truly support the people and communities impacted by US nuclear activities.](#)**

And -- “as the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) works its way through Congress, it is **urgent that we work to push back on expanding the nuclear arms race**” (Sara Haghdosti, *Win Without War*, 7/7/23).

“Contact your Congressional representative to **[support the Lee-Pocan amendment](#)** to the NDAA (National Defense Authorization Act), moving over 10% of the proposed Pentagon budget from excessive war spending to underfunded domestic human needs priorities. **We must reverse our course that would have us spending \$1 trillion annually on the military by the end of the decade and instead care for people in dire need.**” (Sisters of Mercy, *Mercy Justice*, 7/12/23)